

[PERSPECTIVE]

For the Love of Riding

What is it about motorcycles? You wake up early on Sunday morning to ride to a parking lot to meet a dozen or so other riders who are all there because of the same impulse. For some of us, it's a hobby—defined as something that takes up all of your time, love and, most of all, your extra cash. For others, it's a way of life.

This month is Motorcycle Awareness Month. As an avid motorcyclist, I thought I'd share some of my thoughts.

I love motorcycles. I'm one of those whose head turns in an instant upon discovering anything on two wheels with a motor larger than 50cc. Those who ride can relate. My friends say it's a sickness. I say it makes me who I am. My bikes—yes, I have more than one—keep me grounded. Without them, I feel disconnected. Even though something basic links all riders together, as many different reasons exist for riding as there are riders.

For me, nothing compares to moving through the air on a well-made machine, taking in the passing scenery. The rush of the morning chill. The magnificent sight of the sun rising off the coast while riding down the eastbound lane of Hawaii's Highway 3. The smell of freshly cut grass, fragrant tropical flowers and the salt air of the Pacific. No worries, just the wholesome pleasure of the ride. Most of the time, it doesn't matter where, just as long as the road is open.

People rarely are neutral in their opinions about motorcycles—they either love 'em or despise 'em. That's where we, as motorcyclists, need to do our part as ambassadors of our sport, hobby, lifestyle, sickness, or whatever you want to call it. You don't ride a motorcycle if you want to remain invisible. You also have to be willing to accept the many variables and consequences of riding. You have to learn the basics, make mistakes (not too serious, if you're lucky), and then learn from them. You'll go on lots of rides alone, with good friends, and, occasionally, with near-strangers. All these things will help you discover a very different world of riding.

I spend the week eagerly waiting for the early weekend mornings. Sometimes I don't sleep well the night before. I guess it's because of the anticipation of what the next morning's ride will bring. When facilitating rider courses at the [Marine Corps Base Hawaii] safety center, I try to display this enthusiasm. Keep in mind that my intentions are not to



Photo courtesy of MCBH Hawaii

promote motorcycling but the positive attitude toward the responsibility we have. I remind those who ride to conduct themselves in a manner that leaves an acceptable impression, for we are all judged as a whole out on the roadway. It's truly a pleasure to be with those who attend these sessions. A large percentage are young and eager. Many immerse themselves in the concepts and principles of sound riding. With this cooperative relationship, mutual goals are shared, and only positive results can come from it. Life only can get better. It certainly has for me.

Riding a motorcycle makes me feel many different things: power, elation, peace, happiness, and tranquility. Sometimes, it happens all within the same five miles.

Ride well.

— Mario Diprete

MOTORCYCLE TRAINING INSTRUCTOR, MCB HAWAII

Vinson Sailors Take Heed

Since pulling into the Tidewater area in Virginia, USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) has had 25 cases where Sailors were found driving under the influence—eight of them in March and three in April. Two *Vinson* Sailors who were recently charged with driving under the influence decided to share their experiences with the rest of the command.

Machinist Mate Second Class Nathan Mullenniex from the reactor division and Airman Apprentice Edward Hetrick from supply division are lucky to be alive. While MM2(SW) Mullenniex is concerned with losing his significant other and figuring out how to recoup thousands of dollars in damages to a totaled car, AA(SW) Hetrick is trying to figure out how to work his way through an ongoing lie with his family. He was too ashamed to face them with the truth of his DUI.

“These were the most expensive five beers I’ve ever had in my life,” said Mullenniex. “I’m unsure of my personal life. I don’t know if my girlfriend is going to stick with me through this.” Despite all, however, they stand today—still living, still breathing—a fact *Vinson’s* Commanding Officer Capt. Kevin Donegan expressed just before handing down their punishments: 45 days restriction, 45 days extra duty, half-month’s pay for two months (one month suspended) and reduction in rate to the next lower pay grade (suspended).

“You never make good decisions once you’ve been drinking,” said Donegan. “You’re lucky to be at Captain’s Mast. You could be in the hospital, at a funeral, or in jail.”

The recent spate of DUI cases has proven that some *Vinson* Sailors haven’t yet understood the command’s policy of “One drink equals do not drive.” Both Mullenniex and Hetrick have agreed to help drive this word home during a command-wide safety stand-down slated for May. They consented to have their experiences videotaped as part of a production documenting a DUI-related Captain’s Mast.

Driving while intoxicated or drunk is dangerous, and drivers with high blood alcohol content (BAC) are at increased risk of car accidents, highway injuries, and vehicular deaths. If a person is caught drinking and driving in Virginia, the penalties include license suspension or revocation, impounding or confiscating vehicle plates, fines or jail time.

If you are as lucky as Mullenniex or Hetrick and happen to be turned over to the command, you face XO and Captain’s Mast where you will be charged with Article 111, *Drunken or Reckless Driving*. The penalty is generally restriction, forfeiture of pay, and reduction in rank to the next lower pay grade. Remember, that’s being lucky. The worst cases documented usually included a loss of life or permanent loss of one’s normal functions, such as walking, talking or unassisted breathing. Being responsible during off hours carries the same weight as the times spent in uniform.

“We in uniform need to be living up to the ‘standard,’ and not drinking and driving is a standard that is easy to live up to,” said Donegan.

—PH3(AW/SW) Crystal Vigil
USS CARL VINSON PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

Editor’s Note:

USS *Carl Vinson*, in cooperation with the Naval Safety Center and DAPMA Norfolk, recently conducted a DUI focus group consisting of 44 crewmembers. Recommendations will be turned in to the ship’s safety department. To schedule a focus group, call (757) 444-3520, Ext. 7312.

The \$8,000 Drink!

Towing Charges.....	\$ 150
Lawyer.....	\$3,500
Fine.....	\$ 400
Alcohol-Education Course.....	\$ 150
3-Year Insurance Surcharge.....	\$1,500
License Reinstatement.....	\$1,000
Court Fees.....	\$ 450
Drug and Alcohol Evaluation.....	\$ 75
Alcohol Treatment.....	\$ 400
Loss of Work Time.....	\$ 50
Cost Recovery.....	\$ 350

*Charges may vary by geographic location.

Driving Under the Influence

The Law

Legal drinking age — 21 years old
Level of blood alcohol .08 — DUI
.20 blood alcohol content — increased penalties for DUI

Persons Under the Age of 21

Possession of an alcoholic beverage under the age of 21 — arrestable 2nd-degree misdemeanor with a fine of up to \$500
Operating or in physical control of a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol content of .02 or greater — automatic 6-month suspension of driver’s license
A refusal to submit to a breath test requested by law enforcement — 1 year automatic suspension of driver’s license

Driver’s License Penalties for DUI

Blood alcohol content of .08 or greater — automatic 6-month suspension of driver’s license
Refusal to submit to any chemical testing to include breath, blood, and/or urine testing — 1 year automatic suspension of driver’s license for the first refusal and 18 months suspension for a second or subsequent refusal

TOTAL	\$ 8,025
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Source: ctsi.org